

Message Text

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SUBJECT: GREEK VIEWS ON SHUTTLE VS. ARIANE FOR INTELSAT
LAUNCH VEHICLE

REF: ATHENS 0524, STATE 6031

1. RE LONG TERM FUTURE OF SPACE SHUTTLE. CARTER ADMINIS-
TRATION CONTINUES TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF SPACE SHUTTLE

PROGRAM. THE FY 1979 BUDGET REQUEST SENT BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE U.S. CONGRESS JAN 23, 1978 REAFFIRMS THE ADMINISTRATION'S LONG TERM COMMITMENT TO THIS PROGRAM. FOUR SHUTTLE ORBITER VEHICLES ARE SUPPORTED AS WELL AS FUNDS FOR TWO LAUNCH SITES (ONE ON THE EAST COAST FOR LOW INCLINATION LAUNCHES AND ONE ON THE WEST COAST FOR HIGH INCLINATION LAUNCHES). THE FIRST SHUTTLE IS SCHEDULED FOR SIX ORBITAL TEST FLIGHTS BEGINNING MARCH 1979. THE SECOND SHUTTLE ORBITER IS SCHEDULED FOR DELIVERY TO NASA IN FEBRUARY 1981 WITH PROJECTED USE FOR FLIGHTS AS EARLY AS MAY 1981. IF FUTURE BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS REQUIRE CUTBACK IN THE SPACE SHUTTLE PROGRAM OR DELAY, CAPABILITY OF LAUNCHING INTELSAT SATELLITES WOULD CONTINUE TO EXIST USING U.S. EXPENDABLE LAUNCH VEHICLES. THE UNITED STATES IS COMMITTED IN PRINCIPLE TO PROVIDING LAUNCH SERVICES

FOR INTELSAT OR ANY OTHER USER. EVEN IF SPACE SHUTTLE PROGRAM ENCOUNTERS SERIOUS DELAY, INTELSAT WOULD NOT BE LEFT WITHOUT A U.S. LAUNCHING CAPABILITY. ADDITIONALLY, ALL USG USERS HAVE COMMITTED TO TRANSITION FROM EXPENDABLE LAUNCH VEHICLES TO THE SPACE SHUTTLE. REQUIREMENTS OF ALL USERS FOR STS SERVICES HAS LED TO ALMOST COMPLETE BOOKING OF SHUTTLE FLIGHTS FROM MID-1980 THROUGH EARLY 1982 (INCLUDING THE SPACES TENTATIVELY RESERVED FOR INTELSAT).

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2. RE RISING COSTS OF LAUNCHES AND SUDDEN DEMANDS BY NASA FOR PREMATURE COMMITMENTS. NASA'S PROJECTED PRICES FOR LAUNCH SERVICES HAVE NOT BEEN RISING. PRICES FOR THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF OPERATION ARE FIXED IN 1975 DOLLARS SUBJECT ONLY TO ESCALATION AS REFLECTED IN THE U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS INDEX. PRICES BEING NEGOTIATED TODAY ARE WITHIN THE BAND OF PRICES WHICH WERE PUBLICLY STATED BY MR. JOHN YARDLEY, ASSOCIATED ADMINISTRATOR FOR SPACE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS, AT A PARIS SYMPOSIUM IN APRIL 1976. AFTER THREE YEARS OF OPERATION, PRICES WILL BE ADJUSTED (EITHER UPWARD OR DOWNWARD) ON BASIS OF PROJECTIONS FOR RECOVERY OF OPERATIONS COST ONLY. NO RECOVERY OF STS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COSTS IS BEING SOUGHT, THEREBY HELPING TO KEEP THE COST TO A USER AT A MINIMUM. IN AN EFFORT TO FIND THE MOST ECONOMICAL MEANS FOR LAUNCH SERVICES, NASA HAS OVER THE LAST YEAR BEEN NEGOTIATING WITH INTELSAT'S MANAGEMENT SERVICE CONTRACTOR, COMSAT, TO REACH A FAIR AND EQUITABLE SOLUTION TO COST PROBLEMS. DEMANDS HAVE NOT BEEN SUDDEN NOR HAS THERE BEEN PRESSURE FOR PREMATURE COMMITMENTS. THE NEED FOR DECISION FROM THE INTELSAT BOARD OF GOVERNORS ON THE UPPER STAGE WAS COMMUNICATED TO COMSAT INFORMALLY ALMOST

ONE YEAR AGO. THERE APPEARS TO BE SOME MISUNDERSTANDING BY SOME BOARD MEMBERS REGARDING THESE POINTS. NASA IS SCHEDULED TO PRESENT A BRIEFING TO THE INTEL SAT BOARD OF GOVERNORS AT THE FEBRUARY MEETING WHEN HOPEFULLY ANY MISUNDERSTANDINGS CAN BE CLARIFIED OR ERASED.

3. NASA OFFICIALS CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE PRIOR TO THE INTEL SAT BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING TO BRIEF GOG DELEGATES (OR THOSE OF ANY INFO ADDRESSEE) AND ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS WHICH NEED CLARIFICATION. REQUEST POST PASS ABOVE INFORMATION TO APPROPRIATE GOG OFFICIALS WITH INVITATION OF NASA TO MEET WITH THEM. VANCE

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